

UNDER THE APPLE TREE

NO. 3249

A SERMON

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*“I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.”
Solomon’s Song 2:3*

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon the same text is #1120, The Apple Tree in The Woods]

CHRIST *known should be Christ used*. The spouse knew her Beloved to be like a fruit-bearing tree, and at once she sat down under his shadow, and fed upon His fruit. It is a pity that we know so much about Christ and yet enjoy Him so little. May our experience keep pace with our knowledge and may that experience be composed of a practical using of our Lord.

Jesus casts a shadow, let us sit under it. Jesus yields fruit, let us taste the sweetness of it. Depend upon it that the way to learn more is to use what you know, and moreover, the way to learn a truth thoroughly is to learn it experientially. You know a doctrine beyond all fear of contradiction when you have proved it for yourself by personal test and trial.

The bride in the Song as good as says, “I am certain that my Beloved casts a shadow, for I have sat under it, and I am persuaded that He bears sweet fruit, for I have tasted of it.” The best way of demonstrating the power of Christ to save is to trust in Him and be yourself saved by Him—and of all those who are sure of the divinity of our holy faith, there are none so certain as those who feel its divine power upon themselves.

You may reason yourself into a belief of the Gospel and you may, by further reasoning, keep yourself orthodox—but a personal trial and an inward knowing of the truth are incomparably the best evidences. If Jesus is as an apple tree among the trees of the woods, do not keep away from Him, but sit under his shadow and taste His fruit. He is a Savior—do not believe that fact and yet remain unsaved. As far as Christ is known to you, so far make use of Him. Is not this sound common sense?

We would further remark that *we are at liberty to make every possible use of Christ*. Shadow and fruit may both be enjoyed. Christ, in His infinite condescension exists for needy souls. Oh, let us say it over again. It is a bold word, but it is true—as Christ Jesus, our Lord exists for the benefit of His people. A Savior only exists to save. A physician lives to heal. The good Shepherd lives, yea, dies for His sheep.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has wrapped us about His heart—we are intimately interwoven with all His offices, with all His honors, with all His traits of character, with all that He has done, and with all that He has yet to do. The sinners’ Friend lives for sinners, and sinners may have Him and use Him to the uttermost.

He is as free to us as the air we breathe. What are fountains for but that the thirsty may drink? What is the harbor for but that storm-tossed barques may there find refuge? What is Christ for, but that poor guilty ones like ourselves may come to Him, and look and live, and afterwards may have all our needs supplied out of His fullness?

We have thus the door set open for us and we pray that the Holy Spirit may help us to enter in while we notice in the text two things which we pray that you may enjoy to the full. First, *the heart’s rest in Christ*—“I sat down under his shadow with great delight.” And secondly, *the heart’s refreshment in Christ*—“His fruit was sweet to my taste.”

I. To begin with, we have here THE HEART’S REST IN CHRIST.

To set this forth, let us notice the character of the person who uttered this sentence. She who said, “I sat down under his shadow with great delight,” was *one who had known before what weary travel meant and therefore valued rest*. The man who has never labored knows nothing of the sweetness of repose. The loafer who has eaten bread he never earned, from whose brow there never oozed a drop of honest sweat, does not deserve rest and knows not what it is. It is to the laboring man that rest is sweet. And when at last we come, toil-worn with many miles of weary plodding, to a shaded place where we may comfortably “sit down”—then are we filled with delight.

The spouse had been seeking her Beloved, and in looking for Him she had asked where she was likely to find Him. “Tell me,” says she, “O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon.” He told her to go and seek Him by the footsteps of the flock. She did go her way, but after awhile she came to this resolve—“I will *sit down* under his shadow.”

Many of you have been sorely wearied with going your way to find peace. Some of you tried ceremonies and multiplied them, and the priest came to your help, but he mocked your hearts’ distress. Others of you sought by various systems of thought to come to an anchorage. But tossed from billow to billow, you found no rest upon the seething sea of speculation.

More of you tried by your good works to go in rest to your consciences. You multiplied your prayers, you poured out floods of tears. You hoped by alms-giving and by the like, that some merit might accrue to you and that your heart might feel acceptance with God, and so have rest. You toiled and toiled, like the men that were in the vessel with Jonah, when they rowed hard to bring their ship to land, but could not, for the sea wrought and was tempestuous.

There was no escape for you that way and so you were driven to another way—even to rest in Jesus. My heart looks back to the time when I was under a sense of sin and sought with all my soul to find peace, but could not discover it, high or low, in any place beneath the sky. Yet when—

“I saw One hanging on a tree,”—

as the Substitute for sin, then my heart sat down under His shadow with great delight. My heart reasoned thus with herself—Did Jesus suffer in my stead? Then I shall not suffer. Did He bear my sin? Then I do not bear it. Did God accept His Son as my Substitute? Then He will never smite *me*. Was Jesus acceptable with God as my sacrifice? Then what contents the Lord may well enough content me, so I will go no further, but “sit down under his shadow,” and enjoy a delightful rest.

She who said, “I sat down under his shadow with great delight,” *could appreciate shade, for she had been sunburnt*. This was her exclamation, “Look not upon me, because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me.” She knew what heat meant, what the burning sun meant, and therefore shade was pleasant to her. You know nothing about the deliciousness of shade till you travel in a thoroughly hot country—then you are delighted with it.

Did you ever feel the heat of divine wrath? Did the great Sun—that Sun without variableness or shadow of a turning—ever dart His hottest rays upon you—the rays of His holiness and justice? Did you cower down beneath the scorching beams of that great light, and say, “We are consumed by Your anger”?

If you have ever felt *that*, you have found it a very blessed thing to come under the shadow of Christ’s atoning sacrifice. A shadow, you know, is cast by a body coming between us and the light and heat—and our Lord’s most blessed body has come between us and the scorching sun of divine justice, so that we sit under the shadow of His mediation with great delight.

And now, if any other sun begins to scorch us, we fly to our Lord. If domestic troubles, or business cares, or Satanic temptations, or inward corruption oppresses us, we hasten to Jesus’ shadow, to hide under Him, and there “sit down” in the cool refreshment with great delight. The interposition of our blessed Lord is the cause of our inward quiet. The sun cannot scorch *me*, for it scorched *Him*. My

troubles need not trouble me, for He has taken my trouble, and I have left them in His hands. “I sat down under his shadow.”

Mark well these two things concerning the spouse. She knew what it was to be weary and she knew what it was to be sunburnt—and just in proportion as you, also, know these two things, your valuation of Christ will rise. You who have never pined under the wrath of God have never prized the Savior. Water is of small value in this land of brooks and rivers, and so you commonly sprinkle the roads with it. But I warrant you that, if you were making a day’s march over burning sand, a cup of cold water would be worth a king’s ransom. And so, to thirsty souls, Christ is precious, but to none beside.

Now, when the spouse was sitting down, restful and delighted, *she was overshadowed*. She says, “I sat down *under his shadow*.” I do not know a more delightful state of mind than to feel quite overshadowed by our beloved Lord. Here is my black sin, but there is His precious blood overshadowing my sin and hiding it forever. Here is my condition by nature, an enemy to God, but He who reconciled me to God by His blood has overshadowed that also, so that I forget that I was once an enemy in the joy of being now a friend.

I am very weak, but He is strong and His strength overshadows my feebleness. I am very poor, but He has all riches and His riches overshadow my poverty. I am most unworthy, but He is so worthy that if I use His name, I shall receive as much as if I were worthy. His worthiness overshadows my unworthiness.

It is very precious to put the truth the other way and say—If there be anything good in me, it is not good when I compare myself with Him, for His goodness quite eclipses and overshadows it. Can I say that I love Him? So I do, but I hardly dare call it love, for His love overshadows it. Did I suppose that I served Him? So I would, but my poor service is not worth mentioning in comparison with what He has done for me. Did I think I had any degree of holiness? I must not deny that His Spirit works in me—but when I think of His immaculate life and all His divine perfections, where am I? What am I?

Have you not sometimes felt this? Have you not been so overshadowed and hidden under your Lord that you became as nothing? I know what it is to feel that, if I die in a workhouse, it does not matter as long as my Lord is glorified. Mortals may cast out my name as evil, if they like, but what does it matter since His dear name shall one day be printed in stars athwart the sky? Let Him overshadow me—I delight that it should be so.

The spouse tells us that, when she became quite overshadowed, then *she felt great delight*. Great “I” never has great delight, for it cannot bear to acknowledge a greater than itself, but the humble believer finds his delight in being overshadowed by His Lord. In the shade of Jesus we have more delight than in any fancied light of our own.

The spouse had *great* delight. I trust that you Christian people do have great delight. And if not, you ought to ask yourselves whether you really are the people of God. I like to see a cheerful countenance—ay, and to hear of raptures in the hearts of those who are God’s saints. There are people who seem to think that religion and gloom are married and must never be divorced. Pull down the blinds on Sunday and darken the rooms. If you have a garden or a rose in bloom, try to forget that there are such beauties—are you not to serve God as dolorously as you can? Put your book under your arm and crawl to your place of worship in as mournful a manner as if you were being marched to the whipping-post.

Act thus if you will, but give me that religion which cheers my heart, fires my soul, and fills me with enthusiasm and delight—for that is likely to be the religion of heaven—and it agrees with the experience of the inspired Song.

Although I trust that we know what delight means, I question if we have enough of it to describe ourselves as *sitting down* in the enjoyment of it. Do you give yourselves enough time to sit at Jesus’ feet? *There* is the place of delight, do you abide in it? Sit down under his shadow. “I have no leisure,” cries one. Try and make a little. Steal it from your sleep if you cannot get it anyhow else.

Grant leisure to your heart. It would be a great pity if a man never spent five minutes with his wife, but was forced to be always hard at work. Why, that is slavery, is it not? Shall we not then have time to

commune with our Best-beloved? Surely, somehow or other, we can squeeze out a little season in which we shall have nothing else to do but to sit down under his shadow with great delight.

When I take my Bible and want to feed on it for myself, I generally get thinking about preaching upon the text and what I should say to you from it. This will not do. I must get away from that and forget that there is a Tabernacle, that I may sit personally at Jesus' feet.

And oh, there is an intense delight in being overshadowed by Him! He is near you and you know it. His dear presence is as certainly with you as if you could see Him, for His influence surrounds you. Often have I felt as if Jesus leaned over me, as a friend might look over my shoulder. Although no cool shade comes over your brow, yet you may as much feel His shadow as if it did, for your heart grows calm—and if you have been wearied with the family, or troubled with the church, or vexed with yourself—you come down from the chamber where you have seen your Lord, and you feel braced for the battle of life—ready for its troubles and its temptations, because you have seen the Lord.

"I sat down," said she, "under his shadow with *great delight*." How great that delight was she could not tell, but she sat down as one overpowered with it, needing to sit still under the load of bliss. I do not like to talk much about the secret delights of Christians because there are always some around us who do not understand our meaning.

But I will venture to say this much—that, if worldlings could but even guess what are the secret joys of believers, they would give their eyes to share them with us. We have troubles, and we admit it, we expect to have them, but we have joys which are frequently excessive. We would not like that others should be witnesses of the delight which now and then tosses our soul into a very tempest of joy.

You know what it means, do you not? When you have been quite alone with the heavenly Bridegroom, you wanted to tell the angels of the sweet love of Christ to you, a poor unworthy one. You even wished to teach the golden harps fresh music, for seraphs know not the heights and depths of grace as you know them.

The spouse had great delight—and we know that she had for this one reason, that *she did not forget it*. This verse and the whole Song is a remembrance of what she had enjoyed. She says, "I sat down under his shadow." It may have been a month, it may have been years ago, but she had not forgotten it. The joys of fellowship with God are written in marble. "Engraved as in eternal brass" are memories of communion with Christ Jesus.

"Above fourteen years ago," says the apostle, "I knew a man." Ah, it was worth remembering all those years. He had not told his delight, but he had kept it stored up. He says, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth)" so great had his delights been.

When we look back, we forget birthdays, holidays, and bonfire-nights which we have spent after the manner of men, but we readily recall our times of fellowship with the Well-Beloved. We have known our Tabors, our times of transfiguration-fellowship, and like Peter, we remember when we were "with him in the holy mount." Our head has leaned upon the Master's bosom and we can never forget the intense delight. Nor will we fail to put on record for the good of others the joys with which we have been indulged.

Now I leave this first part of the subject, only noticing how beautifully natural it is. There was a tree and she sat down under the shadow. There was nothing strained, nothing formal. So ought true piety ever to be consistent with common sense, with that which seems most fitting, most comely, most wise, and most natural. There is Christ, we may enjoy Him—let us not despise the privilege.

II. The second part of our subject is THE HEART'S REFRESHMENT IN CHRIST. "His fruit was sweet to my taste." Here I will not enlarge, but give you thoughts in brief which you can beat out afterwards.

She did not feast upon the fruit of the tree till first she was under the shadow of it. There is no knowing the excellent things of Christ till you trust Him. Not a single sweet apple shall fall to the lot of those who are outside the shadow. Come and trust Christ—and then all that there is in Christ shall be

enjoyed by you. O unbelievers, what blessings you miss. If you will but sit down under His shadow, you shall have all things. But if you will not, neither shall any good thing of Christ's be yours.

But as soon as she was under the shadow, then the fruit was all hers. "I sat down under his shadow," says she, and then, "his fruit was sweet to my taste." Do you believe in Jesus, friend? Then Jesus Christ Himself is yours. And if you do own the tree, you may as well eat the fruit. Since He Himself becomes yours altogether, then His redemption and the pardon that comes of it, His living power, His mighty intercession, the glories of His second advent, and all that belong to Him are made over to you for your personal and present use and enjoyment. All things are yours since Christ is yours.

Only mind that you imitate the spouse—*when she found that the fruit was hers, she ate it.* Copy her closely in this. It is a great fault, in many believers, that they do not appropriate the promises and feed on them. Do not err as they do. Under the shadow, you have a right to eat the fruit. Deny not yourselves the sacred entertainment.

Now it would appear, as we read the text, that *she obtained this fruit without effort.* The proverb says, "He who would gain the fruit must climb the tree." But she did not climb, for she says, "I sat down under his shadow." I suppose the fruit dropped down to her. I know that it is so with us. We no longer spend our money for that which is not bread, and our labor for that which satisfies not—we sit under our Lord's shadow and we eat that which is good—and our soul delights itself in sweetness. Come, Christian, enter into the calm rest of faith by sitting down beneath the cross and you shall be fed even to the full.

The spouse rested while feasting—she sat and ate. So, O true believer, rest while you are feeding upon Christ. The spouse says, "I sat and I ate." Had she not told us, in the former chapter, that the King *sat* at His table? See how like the church is to her Lord and the believer to his Savior! We sit down also and we eat, even as the King does. Right royally are we entertained. His joy is in us and His peace keeps our hearts and minds.

Further, notice that *as the spouse fed upon this fruit, she had a relish for it.* It is not every palate that likes every fruit. Never dispute with other people about tastes of any sort, for agreement is not possible. That dainty which to one person is the most delicious is to another nauseous. And if there were a competition as to which fruit is preferable to all the rest, there would probably be almost as many opinions as there are fruits. But blessed is he who has a relish for Christ Jesus!

Dear hearer, is He sweet to you? Then He is yours. There never was a heart that relished Christ but what Christ belonged to that heart. If you have been feeding on Him and He is sweet to you, go on feasting, for He who gave you a relish gives you Himself to satisfy your appetite.

What are the fruits which come from Christ? Are they not peace with God, renewal of heart, joy in the Holy Ghost, love to the brethren? Are they not regeneration, justification, sanctification, adoption, and all the blessings of the covenant of grace? And are they not each and all sweet to our taste? As we have fed upon them, have we not said, "Yes, these things are pleasant indeed. There are none like them—let us live upon them evermore."

Now sit down, sit down and feed. It seems a strange thing that we should have to persuade people to do that, but in the spiritual world, things are very different from what they are in the natural. In the case of most men, if you put a joint of meat before them and a knife and fork, they do not need many arguments to persuade them to fall to. But I will tell you when they will not do it, and that is when they are full. And I will also tell you when they will do it, and that is when they are hungry.

Even so, if your soul is weary after Christ the Savior, you will feed on Him. But if not, it is useless for me to preach to you or bid you come. However, you who are there, sitting under his shadow, may hear Him utter these words, "Eat, O friend; drink, yea, drink abundantly." You cannot have too much of these good things—the more of Christ, the better the Christian.

We know that the spouse feasted herself right heartily with this food from the tree of life, for, *in after days, she wanted more.* Will you kindly read on in the fourth verse? The verse which contains our text describes, as it were, her first love to her Lord, her country love, her rustic love. She went to the

woods and she found Him there like an apple tree, and she enjoyed Him as one relishes a ripe apple in the country.

But she grew in grace—she learned more of her Lord and she found that her Best-beloved was a King. I should not wonder but what she learned the doctrine of the second advent, for then she began to sing, “He brought me to the banqueting house,” as much as to say—He did not merely let me know Him out in the fields as the Christ in His humiliation, but He brought me into the royal palace, and since He is a King, He brought forth a banner with His own brave escutcheon, and He waved it over me while I was sitting at the table—and the motto of that banner was love.

She grew very full of this. It was such a grand thing to find a great Savior, a triumphant Savior, an exalted Savior—but it was too much for her and she became sick of soul with the excessive glory of what she had learned. And do you see what her heart craves for? She longs for her first simple joys, those countrified delights. “Comfort me with apples,” she says. Nothing but the old joys will revive her.

Did you ever feel like that? I have been satiated with delight in the love of Christ as a glorious, exalted Savior when I have seen Him riding on His white horse, and going forth conquering and to conquer. I have been overwhelmed when I have beheld Him in the midst of the throne, with all the brilliant assembly of angels and archangels adoring Him.

And my thought has gone forward to the day when He shall descend with all the pomp of God—and make all kings and princes shrink into nothingness before the infinite majesty of His glory. Then I have felt as though I must fall at His feet as dead at the sight of Him and I have wanted somebody to come and tell me over again the old, old story of how He died in order that I might be saved.

His throne overpowers me, let me gather fruit from His cross. Bring me apples from “the tree” again. I am awe-struck while in the palace, let me get away to the woods again. Give me an apple plucked from the tree, such as I have given out to boys and girls in His family, such an apple as this, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Or this, “This man receiveth sinners.”

Give me a promise from the basket of the covenant. Give me the simplicity of Christ—let me be a child and feast on apples again, if Jesus be the apple tree. I would fain go back to Christ on the tree in my stead, Christ overshadowing me, Christ feeding me. This is the happiest state to live in. Lord, evermore give us these apples.

You recollect the old story we told years ago of Jack the huckster, who used to sing,—

*“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-all.”*

Those who knew him were astonished at his constant composure. They had a world of doubts and fears and so they asked him why he never doubted. “Well,” he said, “I can’t doubt but what I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, for I know that, and feel it every day. And why should I doubt that Jesus Christ is my All-in-All, for He says He is?”

“Oh!” said his questioner, “I have my ups and downs.” “I don’t,” said Jack, “I can never go up, for I am a poor sinner and nothing at all. And I cannot go down, for Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.” He wanted to join the church, and they said he must tell his experience. He said, “All my experience is that I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all, and Jesus Christ, is my All-in-All.” “Well,” they said, “when you come before the church meeting, the minister may ask you questions.” “I can’t help it,” said Jack, “all I know I will tell you. And this is all I know,—

*‘I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my All-in-All.’”*

He was admitted into the church and continued with the brethren, walking in holiness. But that was still all his experience and you could not get him beyond it. “Why,” said one brother, “I sometimes feel so full of grace, I feel so advanced in sanctification, that I begin to be very happy.” “I never do,” said

Jack. “I am a poor sinner, and nothing at all.” “But then,” said the other, “I go down again and think I am not saved, because I am not as sanctified as I used to be.” “But I never doubt my salvation,” said Jack, “because Jesus Christ is my All-in-All and He never alters.” That simple story is grandly instructive, for it sets forth a plain man’s faith in a plain salvation. It is the likeness of a soul under the apple tree resting in the shade and feasting on the fruit.

Now, at this time, I want you to think of Jesus, not as a Prince, but as an apple tree. And when you have done this, I pray you to *sit down under His shadow*. It is not much to do. Any child, when it is hot, can sit down in a shadow. I want you, next, to feed on Jesus. Any simpleton can eat apples when they are ripe upon the tree. Come and take Christ, then.

You who never came before, come now. Come and welcome. You who have come often and have entered into the palace, and are reclining at the banqueting table—you lords and peers of Christianity—come to the common wood, and to the common apple tree, where poor saints are shaded and fed. You had better come under the apple tree, like poor sinners such as I am, and be once more shaded with boughs, and comforted with apples, or else you may faint beneath the palace glories. The best of saints are never better than when they eat their first fare, and are comforted with the apples which were their first Gospel feast.

The Lord Himself bring forth His own sweet fruit to you. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

GALATIANS 5

Verse 1. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

“You are not under the law, but under grace. Do not subject yourselves, therefore, to legal principles. Do not live as if you were working for wages and were earning your own salvation. Do not submit yourselves to the ritual and commandments of men, which would rob you of your liberty in many ways. But having once become free men, never again wear the chain of a slave—‘Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.’ Because you are the seed of Isaac, who was born according to the promise, you are not the children of the bondwoman—you are not Ishmaelites—therefore, as you were born free, as Christ has made you free by virtue of your new birth, stand fast in that glorious liberty.”

2-3. *Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

If you begin being saved by the law, you must go through with it. You cannot take the principle of law and the principle of grace, and blend those two together. They are like oil and water—they will never mix. If salvation be of works, it is not of grace. And if it be of grace, it is not of works. You cannot go upon the two contrary principles of merit and of favor.

4. *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

You have turned aside from it. You are not standing with one foot upon grace, and one foot upon the law, but you have gone right away from grace. You must cleave to one or the other. If you take the law to be your hope, you must keep to it—and the end will be that you will die in despair.

5-6. *For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.* [See Sermon #1228, Salvation By Faith and The Work of The Spirit] *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.* [See Sermons #1553, Faith Working By Love and #1750, The Luther Sermon at Exeter Hall]

It is not any rite and it is not the neglect of any rite which can produce righteousness. It is as easy to trust in your non-observance of a ceremony as to trust in the ceremony itself, and it will be quite as delusive. It is faith in Christ that brings righteousness—the “faith which worketh by love.”

7. *Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?*

“You Galatians seemed to receive the Gospel very readily and to be very earnest in obeying it. What has caused you to turn aside to the old legal righteousness? You are very changeable, very fickle. You seemed very energetic in running the Christian race—whatever has got in your way? ‘Who did hinder you?’ Somebody or other must have done so.”

8. *This persuasion cometh not from him that calleth you.*

“It does not come from God. He called you to faith in His dear Son, and to all those virtues and graces which naturally spring from the root of faith. Somebody else has called you aside, some false shepherd, who is but a wolf in sheep’s clothing, and who would destroy you if he could.”

9. *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

One false doctrine very soon sours all your belief—the whole lump is leavened with it. If you have a wrong ground of confidence, you are wrong altogether.

10. *I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.*

Depend upon it, every man who troubles a church with false doctrine is amenable to the High Court above. And sooner or later, he may expect even a temporal judgment here below.

11. *And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offense of the cross ceased.* [See Sermon #2594, “The Offense of The Cross”]

“The offense of the cross” is that it sets up faith as the infinite merit of Christ’s atonement and knocks down all confidence in outward rites and ceremonies. Paul says that, if he had preached the flesh-pleasing doctrines of men, he would not have been persecuted—and the fact that he was persecuted was a proof that he was standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free.

12. *I would they were even cut off which trouble you.*

Excommunicated and put out of the church. Nay, it would be better if they were even dead, rather than that they should live to spread such evil leaven in a Christian church. Sometimes, when we think of the interests of immortal souls, we are apt to grow indignant, and rightly so, towards willfully false teachers.

13. *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

Do not let liberty become license. Do not say, “I may do this or that, and therefore I will do it because it pleases me.” You are not to do anything because it pleases you, but you are to do everything because it pleases God. When a man is no longer a slave to sin, or self, or Satan, let him begin to serve his brethren—“By love serve one another.”

14. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

The legal spirit is all for expansion—it multiplies its commands and lays down its ritual for this, and that, and the other. But the Gospel spirit is all for condensation. It has condensed the whole law into a single word, that is, “love.”

15. *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed by one of another.*

This man finds fault, the other must have his own way, a third is for something quite new, a fourth is for nothing but what is antique, and so they fall to squabbling and quarrelling.

16. *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

Be obedient to that great principle of the Spirit which goes with the doctrine of grace and salvation by faith, and then you will not be obedient to that lusting of the flesh which is in you by nature.

17. *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary, the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

You are pulled about by two contrary forces—you are dragged downward by the flesh—and you are drawn upward by the Spirit.

18. *But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

The Spirit never brings the soul into bondage. The terrors and the fears which come of legal slavery are not the work of the Spirit of God. Where He works, holiness is delight and the service of God is a continual joy. Oh, that we may be thus led of the Spirit!

19. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest,*

They are clear, plain, self-condemned.

19-21. *Which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Observe that the Gospel gives no toleration to sin. Some people tell us that the doctrine of faith is not practical, but they know better although they say that. They have only to observe those who are actuated by the principle of faith and they will find them abounding in good works, while the men who are swayed by the principle of law talk a great deal about works, but have little enough of them in practice. The Gospel denounces sin, ay, and kills it. It gives us the force with which we fight against it and overcome it.

22-23. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,* [See Sermons #1582, Fruit of The Spirit—Joy and #1782, The First Fruit of The Spirit] *peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*

Either human or divine—everybody is agreed that these things are all good.

24. *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affection and lusts.*

Condemned it to die, nailed it up to the cross, and kept it in a dying, mortifying posture.

25. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

If our spiritual life is the result of a divine work, let our actions be in harmony with it—"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."

26. *Let us not be desirous of vain glory,*

We call it glory, but it is vain glory. It is marred by vanity if it arises from anything done by us. Glory for you or for me because of anything that we can do is too absurd an idea to be entertained for a moment. "Let us not be desirous of vain glory,"—

26. *Provoking one another,*

For, whenever a man is proud, and blustering, and vainglorious, he is sure to provoke somebody or other—and then they who are so provoked fall into another sin, viz.,—the sin of—

26. *Envyng one another.*

O brethren, let us try to get over all this and reach out to that blessed state of love which will bring us peace and joy in the Holy Ghost!

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.